

HELM, ENNIE TODD

DRAWER 100

CONTEMPORARIES

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A very faint, light-colored watermark or background image of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. is visible across the entire page. The memorial's iconic portico of Corinthian columns and its tiered stone steps are discernible against a darker, textured background.

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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Emilie Todd Helm

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

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Lincoln Lore

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BRIG.-GEN. BEN HARDIN HELM MRS. LINCOLN'S "REBEL" BROTHER-IN-LAW

Editor's Note: In 1943 the Civil War Round Table of Chicago published 225 copies of R. Gerald McMurtry's brochure, *Ben Hardin Helm, Rebel Brother-in-Law of Abraham Lincoln, with a Biographical Sketch of His Wife and a Description of the Todd Family of Kentucky*. This was the Round Table's first publication, and 25 copies were reserved by the author and the remainder were distributed among its members and friends. Now, twenty-nine years later, it is being reprinted (without the references and annotations) because very little information on Ben Hardin Helm has appeared in past issues of the *Lincoln Lore* Bulletin.

R. G. M.

No high official of the Confederate government, either soldier or civilian, had a more intimate contact with President Abraham Lincoln than the rebel brigadier-general, Ben Hardin Helm. This close association resulted from the fact that the two men had married half-sisters and this kinship formed a lasting friendship which continued until the first years of the Civil War and until the death of General Helm.

Lincoln and Helm had much in common other than marriage in the Todd family. The young soldier resided in Hardin County, Kentucky, only fourteen miles from the place where Lincoln first saw the light of day, although he was born June 2, 1831, in the home of his grandfather, Ben Hardin, at Bardstown. Then, too, during the years of peace before the Civil War, Ben Hardin Helm had taken up law as his profession, which of course provided him with a congenial basis for a lasting friendship with Abe Lincoln, who was making a name for himself before the Illinois bar and in local politics.

Lincoln's brother - in - law was the oldest child of twelve children born to John Larue Helm and Lucinda Barbour Hardin. His father was twice governor of Kentucky and served in several other offices of trust and profit. The son was nurtured by the father in the Whig tradition, the same political party Lincoln championed so long in Illinois. John L. Helm was elected Lieutenant-governor in 1848 on the Whig ticket with John J. Crittenden, and he served out that notable Kentuckian's term when he resigned in 1850 to enter the Fillmore cabinet. Again in 1867, during the reconstruction period, he was elected governor by a majority of 43,019 votes over his combined

radical and conservative opponents. Governor Helm took the oath of office on September 3, while lying ill at his home in Elizabethtown, and he expired five days later before assuming his official duties.

His mother was a daughter of Ben Hardin, a member of the United States Senate from Kentucky, who was dubbed by John Randolph as a "kitchen-knife whetted on a brick." The eccentric Virginian characterized Hardin as being "rough and homely but keen and trenchant." From such illustrious forebears, who rank high on the list of Kentucky's imperishable names, Ben Hardin Helm was reared with a love for his country, his state and Southern institutions. Quite naturally he found his place in the aristocratic society of the South and, not unlike his friends and neighbors, he cherished the Union, but the key-stone of that governmental structure, in the light of his upbringing, was States Rights.

Helm received his literary education in the Elizabethtown Seminary, where he displayed a prodigious mind by completing the prescribed course of study when he was only fifteen. Even at this tender age, he decided upon a military career, but because of his youth he was unable to enter the West Point Military Academy immediately. Undaunted, he enrolled as a cadet in the Kentucky Military Institute in the winter of 1846. Cadet Helm remained at K.M.I. for only three months and then entered the United States Military Academy on July 1, 1847, shortly after his sixteenth birthday. After completing the regular four-year course, he was graduated ninth in a class of forty-two members in 1851. He was brevetted second-lieutenant in the Second Cavalry, July 1, 1851. However, before reporting for duty on the frontier at Fort Lincoln, Texas, he attended the Cavalry School for Practice at Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

While serving with his company, the "Second Dragoons," he unfortunately contracted inflammatory rheumatism, which rendered him totally unfit for a soldier's life. The seriousness of the attack, indeed, even pre-



Photograph from the Meserve Collection

A biographical sketch of Brigadier General Ben Hardin Helm is to be found in Ed Porter Thompson's, *History of the Orphan Brigade*, Lewis N. Thompson, Louisville, Kentucky, 1898, pages 380-387.



Ben Hardin Helm graduated from the United States Military Academy (ninth in a class of forty-two members) in 1851.

cluded his chances for recovery, so he obtained a leave of absence and returned to his home in Kentucky. The six months he had spent in Texas with the Second Cavalry convinced him that he was best fitted for the military profession and he longed for the day when he could rejoin his comrades at Fort Lincoln.

But after taking up his residence in Kentucky, he gave considerable thought to the future and, not unmindful of his health and the fact that there was small chance for attaining distinction in the army when the nation was at peace, he yielded to his father's wishes and resigned his commission on October 9, 1852. This resignation from the army necessitated his following an entirely new career after he had recovered his strength.

The Kentucky climate, along with the proper medical attention, enabled Helm to regain his health, which immediately added fuel to the fire of his ambition. He hoped to win renown in some worthwhile profession. Knowing that law is a trustworthy vehicle for politics, which has rocked in its cradle many a "darling of destiny," he resolved to enter that profession and immediately began to study under the direction of his distinguished father. The law-office course only convinced him of the necessity of adequate training and he enrolled in the School of Law of the University of Louisville, and graduated from that institution in the spring of 1853. Realizing the need for more advanced instruction, he immediately entered the Harvard Law School at Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a six-months course, before returning to Elizabethtown to practice his profession with his father.

The father and son partnership was of only a short duration and in 1856 he organized a law firm with Martin H. Cofer as his partner, which remained in existence until 1858 when he sought a more lucrative field for practice.

Going to the Kentucky metropolis, he was admitted to the Louisville bar and there he formed a partnership with Horatio W. Bruce, his brother-in-law. This partnership continued until 1861 when both men cast their lot with the Confederacy. As a member of the Louisville bar, he displayed great talent, and this, along with his high sense of honor, his lofty purpose, and his

unswerving integrity, distinguished him as one of the ablest lawyers practicing before the Kentucky courts.

With a military-legal education, he always displayed a fine grasp of the strong points of the law and, in conducting a case before the court, he used the technique of a general coupled with "the astuteness of the hair-splitter." He attacked the vulnerable positions of his legal opponents, which as a cadet in the military academy he had been taught to determine in advance. When he was placed on the defensive, he so guarded his position as to exhaust and bewilder his opponents before they could center their attack. Complicated suits in chancery were of little concern to Ben Hardin Helm, who early in his legal career learned to comprehend quickly their exacting terms in the development of his cases for his clients.

Shortly after graduating from law school, Helm entered politics and in 1855 he was chosen to represent Hardin County in the Kentucky General Assembly. As a state representative, he assumed a place of distinction in the legislative chamber, because of his legal knowledge and his astute grasp of governmental problems seldom displayed by one of his age. Serving his county in this capacity for only one term, he next announced his candidacy for Commonwealth Attorney for his own judicial district (Third District of Kentucky) and won that office in 1856. He served in this position until 1858. The most remarkable thing about the career of this brilliant lawyer was that he had achieved all of these distinctions by the time that he had reached the age of twenty-eight.

While a member of the General Assembly, this eligible young politician met Miss Emilie Todd, a daughter of Robert S. Todd of Lexington, Kentucky. Their friendship ripened into an affair of matrimony and on March 20, 1856, the couple was married in Frankfort, Kentucky, which was followed by a grand reception at Buena Vista, the country home of the Todds. Mrs. Helm, like her half sister, Mrs. Lincoln, was accomplished in the cultural arts which the "Athens of the West" afforded in her day. Being an aristocratic and estimable lady, this marriage was looked upon with favor by both the Todd and Helm families and the young matron endeared herself to all of her husband's Elizabethtown friends.



Ben Hardin Helm married Miss Emilie Todd, a daughter of Robert S. Todd of Lexington, Kentucky on March 20, 1856. This photograph was taken in 1857.

In 1857, while still practicing law in his home town, Helm had an opportunity to go to Springfield, Illinois, to argue a case before the courts of that capital city. This afforded him an opportunity to visit his kinsmen and to extend to Mary Todd Lincoln the sincerest and best wishes of his wife, who was familiarly known to all her relatives as "Little Sister." Mrs. Lincoln had never before had an opportunity to meet the distinguished husband of Emilie and she greeted him cordially as a brother-in-law and fellow Kentuckian. Mary Lincoln saw for herself that he was truly handsome, being six feet tall and having a well-proportioned figure which gave evidence of military training. She liked his penetrating blue eyes, his brown hair which blended with his ruddy complexion, and his genial and attractive countenance which lighted up at the slightest provocation. In receiving Helm in his home as a guest, Lincoln did not forget that this young man was the grandson of the "kitchen-knife whetted on a brick." The Lincolns knew how to be hospitable and they entertained the Kentucky attorney for a week.

Helm was a States Rights Democrat and Lincoln was a Republican and, when their conversation drifted around to politics, they could not agree. With Mary they discussed the slavery question from the date of its inception down to the year of the Dred Scott decision, and Helm believed the border states might be willing to adopt a plan of gradual compensated emancipation, but, as a matter of principle, this scion of the old South, who knew the people of the cotton belt, said the planter would never yield to such a proposal. But, there were topics of conversation more pleasant than politics and Lincoln soon learned that his guest was versed in all the traditions of Hardin County and he delighted in asking him questions about his old home. During this brief visit, a lasting friendship was formed. When Helm bade the Lincolns good-bye upon his departure for Kentucky, none of them realized what a turmoil the country would be facing in four years when Helm would lead a Southern army and Lincoln would find himself on the crest of a volcanic government.

As the country moved toward civil war, Helm argued that there would be no conflict. He would not believe it possible that the American people could be so aroused as to divide into two sections and turn and rend each other. Yet, he had foresight enough to feel that he should re-enter the military service. In 1860, he was appointed Assistant-Inspector General of the Kentucky State Guard and he took an active part in organizing and arming that body of fighting men. This was the year of the presidential election and he watched with anxiety the comet-like rise of Abraham Lincoln across the political horizon. He admired the man, but he



Lieutenant Alexander H. Todd served as aide-de-camp on the staff of General Ben Hardin Helm while he commanded the Second Brigade. He was the second half-brother of Mrs. Lincoln to lose his life for the Confederate cause. On March 4, 1861, he witnessed the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President, having received a special invitation while he resided in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky.

could not vote for him. In fact, Helm was so imbued with the political principles of his father that he worked against his brother-in-law's candidacy. For whom he voted, there appears to be no record, but it is not at all difficult to hazard a guess that the man of his choice was that esteemed Whig of the old school, John Bell, who ran for the presidency on the Constitutional Union ticket.

Yet, in spite of the States Rights Democrats and the advocates of agrarian principles, Abraham Lincoln was elected president and the Southern movement, which is a rather mild way to describe secession, was inaugurated. It was soon apparent to Helm that he must decide upon his future course, and in March, 1861, he went to Washington in quest of a commission. Having a professional connection with the army, he had a reverence for the country's flag, which to him had always symbolized one nation, and not a hodge-podge of confederations. Yet, he was a Kentuckian and a son of the South and he determined that, regardless of the consequences, he would never turn upon his own native soil. Helm still clung to one hope — that the indignation of the South against the incoming Lincoln administration would subside and that all would be peaceful again. But like many other rational men, who had no solution to cope with the situation, he watched helplessly the division of the Union.

At the time when the secession movement was still confined to the deep South, Helm made a second trip to Washington to visit the President. This time he traveled to the capital, because he had received a cordial, personal invitation from the Chief Executive, who was cognizant of the fact that Helm was thinking of again

The Children of Robert S. Todd

Robert S. Todd and Eliza Parker (first wife) had seven children, six of whom reached maturity. Elizabeth married Ninian W. Edwards, Frances married William Wallace, Levi married Louisa Searles, divorced, Mary married Abraham Lincoln, Ann married C. M. Smith, and George married Miss Curry. All the children of the first family, with the exception of George, were loyal to the Union. Robert S. Todd and Elizabeth Humphreys (second wife) had nine children, eight of whom reached maturity. Margaret married C. H. Kellogg, Samuel was not married, David married a Mrs. Williamson, Martha married Clement White, Emilie married Ben Hardin Helm, Alexander was not married, Elodie married N. H. R. Dawson, and Katherine married W. W. Herr. All the children of the second family, with the exception of Margaret, were southern sympathizers.



Lieutenant Wm. Wallace Herr was aide-de-camp on the staff of General Ben Hardin Helm while he commanded the First Kentucky Brigade. He married in January, 1866, Katherine Bodley (Kitty) Todd, the sister of Mrs. Helm and the half-sister of Mrs. Lincoln. As a widow, Mrs. Lincoln never had the opportunity to see or make the acquaintance of W. W. Herr.

entering the Army of the United States. Even at the time when the nation's eyes were focused upon Major Robert Anderson at Fort Sumter and there was talk about whether or not that island fortress should be surrendered to the Confederate government, he could not believe there would be a war.

In spite of his success in the legal profession, Ben Hardin Helm's first love was the army. Lincoln knew he was still a strong Southern-Rights Democrat, yet, not because of this, but in spite of it, he handed the young man a sealed envelope containing an attractive offer of a position. "Ben," he said, "here is something for you. Think it over by yourself and let me know what you will do." Lincoln anticipated the struggle Helm would have in accepting or rejecting the commission he had secured for him, because day by day the country was approaching nearer to the opening of hostilities. In fact, Lincoln was even willing to hold out another inducement, namely, that to prevent him from using his sword directly or indirectly for the coercion of the Southern states and against the people of Kentucky, he would be sent to the frontier and be spared the horrors of a fratricidal war.

The sealed envelope contained a coveted commission—paymaster in the United States Army with the rank of major. What was more, it was highly probable that promotions might come as he gained favor and as the Army was expanded to meet the ominous crisis. The offer stunned Helm when he considered that this position was presented to him at the age of thirty. Such a commission was exceptional for his years, and during his entire career nothing so attractive as this offer had ever before appealed to him. The office of paymaster with the rank of major was far more important than anything he had expected from Lincoln or had even imagined in his most fitful dreams. It was the ideal position for Helm because of his clerical abilities as a result of his work in the legal profession.

This magnanimous offer on the part of Lincoln brought from Helm a confession. "The position you offer me," he said, "is beyond what I had expected in my most hopeful dreams. It is the place above all others

which suits me, Lincoln. You have been kind and generous to me beyond anything I have known. I have no claim upon you, for I opposed your candidacy and did what I could for the election of another, but, with no unkindly feeling towards you; I wish I could see my way. I will try to do what is right. Don't let this offer be made public yet. You shall have my answer in a few days."

It appears that destiny had a hand in making Helm determine his course. In Washington he sought out his old friends — Southern friends, and they exerted an undue influence upon him. Yet, he likely would have reached the same conclusion even if he had discounted the advice of his old comrades. On the same day he had received Lincoln's offer, Helm called upon Colonel Robert E. Lee, recently attached to the Second Cavalry, the same regiment he had been stationed with in Texas shortly after his graduation from West Point. Helm found Colonel Lee in a dilemma. He appeared ill or as if weighted down by some unfortunate difficulty. The Colonel was well enough in body, but temporarily broken in spirit, because he had made a fateful decision. He had resigned on April 20th, his commission in the United States army.

In such a mental state, Colonel Lee did not care to offer Helm any advice and, after reading Lincoln's offer of a commission and being apprised of the fact that the president was Helm's brother-in-law, the experienced soldier told his friend that there was going to be a dreadful war and he had determined that he would not strike at his own people. However, he did not doubt Lincoln's sincerity, but told Helm the president could not control the present trend of political chaos.

Mary Lincoln hoped Helm would accept the commission in order that she might have her attractive sister with her in the Executive Mansion. She would be the toast of Washington and the belle of every presidential reception. She told Ben that the country needed "scholarly, dignified young men in the army," but such statements only made the decision harder to determine.

In thinking over the matter of the commission, Helm realized he would be the youngest officer in the army to hold the rank of major, and, with such a start, he might, by transferring to one of the cavalry regiments, become a colonel within a year's time. He was ambitious and in his pocket was a brilliant career folded and sealed in an envelope from the President of the United States. The only thing he would be required to do would be to accept it. Also, he had great admiration for Lincoln, he was fond of his sister-in-law, and his wife would delight in the gaities of Washington society.

Upon his departure for Kentucky, he bade Mary Lincoln farewell and again she expressed the desire that both he and Emilie would make their home with them in the Executive Mansion. As a farewell gesture, Helm clasped Lincoln's hand and then parted. This was the Lincolns' last glimpse of their fine, upstanding brother-in-law.

Upon Helm's arrival at home, he went to Frankfort and while in the state capital he met Simon Bolivar Buckner, who was then Inspector-General of the Kentucky State Guard with the rank of major-general. Buckner had been Helm's instructor at West Point and their warm friendship and his high regard for Buckner's judgment caused his loyalty to the Union to waver. Buckner was going with the Confederacy and this fact caused Helm to lean further toward the South in the approaching conflict. Next he talked with Thomas B. Monroe, Jr., Secretary of State of Kentucky and a staunch defender of States Rights. Helm called on other friends and discovered that their sympathies were also with the South.

Kentucky at this time was in great turmoil over the secession movement and Helm could not stand idly by and watch the approach of disaster. He was not a man to "halt between two opinions." He realized he could no longer delay making his decision, because this conflict would be a civil war and he did not intend to fight against his own cherished principles.

(Continued to February, 1972, issue)



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(Continued from the January, 1972 issue)

Helm's Southern leanings were undoubtedly strengthened by Governor Beriah Magoffin's reply to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, who asked Kentucky for four regiments of militia for immediate service. His dispatch dated April 15, 1861, stated, "I say, emphatically, Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States." Accordingly, he penned a letter to Lincoln declining the commission and his refusal was recorded by the War Department with the following entry:

"Helm, Ben Hardin, nominated for paymaster in the United States Army, April 27, 1861, Declined." Nevertheless, Helm remained grateful to Lincoln for his kind offer and, even after he had taken the field at the head of Confederate troops, he sent felicitous messages to the president in 1861 and 1862.

Having embraced the cause of the South "with all the enthusiasm of his extremely ardent and enthusiastic nature," Helm visited the Confederate capital at Montgomery, Alabama, to pay his respects to Jefferson Davis and to offer his services for military duty to help the Southern cause. The provisional president of the Confederacy informed Helm that the South already had more troops than they could adequately arm and equip. Davis suggested to Helm that he return to Kentucky and work from a political angle in an attempt to bring his native state into the Confederacy and help win independence for all the slave states.

Helm was a soldier and not a politician and his interest in military affairs caused him first to affiliate with the Kentucky State Militia in attempting to establish a condition of strict neutrality. In the spring of 1861, he took up his work as the Assistant Inspector General of the State Guard and on several occasions he was ordered to enforce upon the people of Kentucky the neutrality policy which soon was proven to be impracticable. Later he used his influence to recruit for the Confederacy the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry. His reputation in Kentucky was such that:

"One blast upon his bugle-horn was worth a thousand men."



A photograph of Mrs. Ben Hardin Helm made in 1864.

The soldiers for the First Regiment of Cavalry were recruited from the different sections of the state and the leadership of Helm was of such a character as to attract a superior class of men to the colors, not usually found in other organizations of the same numerical strength. For this work Helm received from his government a colonel's commission in September, 1861, and he took command of the ten companies which constituted the

First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry. These men were mustered into the Confederate army at Bowling Green, Kentucky, and their colonel instituted a training routine which soon transformed the raw recruits into an army of trained soldiers. Helm's training routine was "company drill in the forenoon, regimental drill in the afternoon, brigade drill on Friday, inspection on Saturday, saber exercise between times and guard and fatigue duty to occupy leisure hours." However, in spite of the arduous tasks, the personal influence of Colonel Helm was felt by every man in his command. He was kind and affable to his troops, but at the same time he maintained a military dignity that did not breed contempt. The men of the First Regiment of Kentucky Cavalry were all of the opinion that their leader was professionally skilled, which of course was a comfort to every soldier in his command.

While Helm's regiment was in training in Southern Kentucky, they engaged in outpost and scout duty, and this body of troops became a kind of corps of observation. Even when the Confederate army abandoned Bowling Green, it was Colonel Helm's duty to cover the retreat. Arriving in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, February 23, 1862, he was placed under the orders of General John C. Breckinridge, where his regiment was temporarily brigaded with the Kentucky Infantry. Upon receiving an order to observe the movements of the Union forces on the Tennessee River, he took up his station at Burnsville, Mississippi, and guarded the approaches to the town of Corinth.

Knowing of his experience in scout duty and regarding him as a capable officer, General Albert Sidney Johnston sent Helm on a tour of observation of the territory between the Union position on the Tennessee and Nash-

ville. Taking with him a select body of cavalrymen, Colonel Helm set out for his duties around the latter part of March and during the first few days of April he reported to Johnston the rapid approach of the Union general, Don Carlos Buell, and he indicated that it was likely he would be able to join General U. S. Grant's forces on April 6th.

Johnston, basing his plans upon Colonel Helm's observations, planned to attack Grant on April 4th, before he could be reinforced by Buell, but he was prevented from doing this, because of the difficulty of transporting his artillery over the wet and soft country roads. The failure to attack Grant before he was reinforced by Buell resulted in a defeat for the Confederate forces and the death of the able Kentuckian, General Johnston. During the battle of Shiloh, Helm's command, the First Kentucky Cavalry, was required to hold its position on the Tennessee to guard the approaches to Johnston's left and rear and with such an assignment they found no opportunity for brilliant action. A detailed account of the activities of Colonel Helm at the time of the battle of Shiloh has never been revealed due to the secret nature of his work in scouting the enemy. Nevertheless, his efforts were observed by his superior officers and won for him the warm encomiums of those who understood the importance of his mission.

After Shiloh, Colonel Helm found himself in line for promotion and on April 17, 1862, General Pierre G. T. Beauregard announced he was to become a brigadier-general with the appointment predicated March 14th. Brigadier General Helm was then ordered to report to General Breckinridge, which he was able to do on the 26th of April. He was then assigned to the command of the Third Brigade of Infantry of the Reserve Corps, which consisted of Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri regiments. Helm was disappointed with his command, because he had under him no Kentucky troops. This condition, however, did not exist for any lengthy period of time, because, on July 8th, at Vicksburg, another change was made in the Reserve Corps, when the regiments under Brigadier General J. M. Hawes were designated as the Second Brigade and placed under the command of General Helm. The troops of this brigade consisted of men from Kentucky, Alabama and Mississippi.

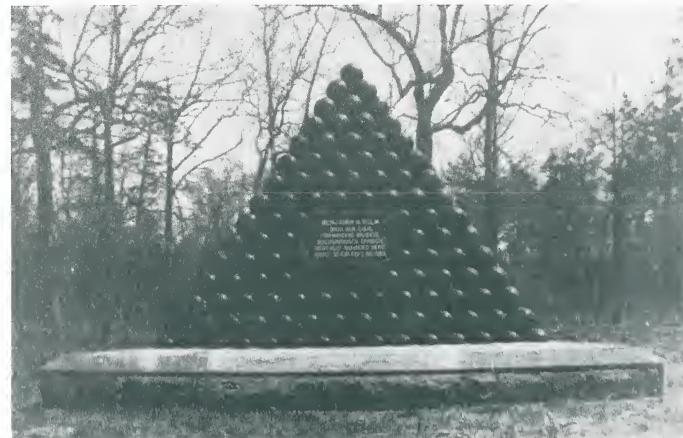
Upon assuming command of the Second Brigade, General Helm appointed his staff and, among the half dozen competent officers whom he named, he picked Major Thomas H. Hayes, his brother-in-law and a resident of Hardin County, Kentucky, and Lieutenant Alexander H. Todd, of Lexington, another brother-in-law, to act in the capacity of assistant inspector general and aide-de-camp respectfully. These men were destined to see action within the month at the battle of Baton Rouge. It was the plan of General Breckinridge to capture that place with the assistance of the immense iron-clad ram, the *Arkansas*, which was to cooperate with his land force. The city was occupied by a Union army under the command of General Thomas Williams, who was successful, although he lost his life, in driving Breckinridge back. Shortly before the attack on Baton Rouge on August 5th, Breckinridge's men were waiting for daylight in order to make a charge when an unfortunate accident occurred. Some mounted rangers were placed behind the artillery and infantry, but in the darkness they eased forward, because they were eager to get into the fray, and in riding to the front they encountered Union sentries. This caused an exchange of shots to be

fired. The Confederate rangers then galloped back to their own lines amidst a hail of fire, and this action provoked additional firing between the Confederate troops and their mounted horsemen.

The results were tragic and among other casualties Brigadier General Helm was dangerously injured by a fall from his horse, being knocked over and contused by the running cavalry. Lieutenant Todd, Mrs. Lincoln's half-brother, was killed from one of the aimless shots that was fired during the confusion. He was the second brother to lose his life, as Samuel Todd was killed while serving with a Louisiana regiment at Shiloh. The death of this young lieutenant, who as a child had played with Robert Lincoln, must have saddened the president's household.

General Helm's injury was of such a serious nature as to render him disabled for weeks, and Colonel Thomas H. Hunt, who had immediately assumed command of his brigade in the action before Baton Rouge, was given temporary command of the troops while his commander recovered. By September, General Helm was again able to report for duty and he was assigned the command of the post of Chattanooga. Later he was transferred to the command of the Eastern District, Department of the Gulf, with headquarters at Pollard, Alabama. This transfer was made after General Braxton Bragg's army had passed Chattanooga on his retreat from Kentucky. The reason for assigning General Helm to the Department of the Gulf was due to Confederate apprehension of an advance on the part of the Federals operating from Pensacola.

A few months later the Confederate government found a more important assignment for General Helm. By the direction of President Davis, he was ordered on January 31, 1863, to relinquish his command of the Eastern District, Department of the Gulf, and to report to General William Joseph Hardee for the command of the brigade of the late Brigadier General Roger W. Hanson who had been killed at the battle of Stone's River. Hardee ordered Helm to report to Breckinridge for the command of the First Kentucky Brigade, which consisted of the Second, Fourth, Sixth and Ninth Kentucky Regiments, Forty-first Alabama Regiment and Captain Robert L. Cobbs' (Kentucky) Battery. Helm was delighted with the assignment, because of the great number of Kentuckians found in his command. His men had unusual confidence in his leadership and the morale of the brigade was greatly enhanced. General Helm took up his assignment on Feb. 16, 1863, and he immediately selected his staff officers. Of the seven men who were chosen, two were from his home community



This cannon-ball pyramid marks the approximate spot on the Chickamauga battlefield where General Ben Hardin Helm fell mortally wounded on September 20, 1863.

of Hardin County and one of his aides-de-camp was Lieutenant William Wallace Herr, who married in January, 1866, Katherine Bodley ("Kitty") Todd, the sister of Mrs. Helm and a half-sister of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln.

For several months the First Kentucky Brigade, which was a part of the division commanded by General Breckinridge, was more or less idle. While they were stationed in middle Tennessee at Wartrace, Manchester, Beech Grove and Hoover's Gap, General Helm drilled his men and became active in his duties as a commander. When Breckinridge was absent, it devolved upon him to command the division, which was good training for a brigadier. Due to the fact that time and again their divisional or brigade commander was absent, or transferred to other commands, or killed in battle, the expatriated Kentuckians often thought of their brigade as an orphan — hence the use of the name "Orphan Brigade" later became current.

While waiting for orders, the First Kentucky Brigade was challenged by the brigade of General Daniel Adams for competitive drill, and the bid was accepted by General Helm. The regiments now contended for the championship of the army and not simply for the division, because it was admitted that Adams' brigade was one of the best drilled in the Army of Tennessee and the Kentuckians claimed they could beat "the world on anything required of soldiers." The drills got under way and the competition was so keen that many high ranking officers of the Confederate army were present to witness the exhibitions. Even his excellency, Jefferson Davis, was apprised of the event and in a letter to the president dated April 15, 1863, Colonel William Preston Johnston stated that the Kentucky Brigade commanded by General Helm had in their performance indicated that they were "rapid, yet precise," that "in . . . appearance" they were "tough and active and they will compare for efficiency with any brigade in the Confederate army." Before the drills had ended, the division of Breckinridge was ordered on an expedition into Mississippi, but the general consensus of opinion was that the Kentuckians were the best trained.

Breckinridge's men did not relish the Mississippi expedition. They felt that expatriated Mississippians should be ordered to that theatre of war. The Kentuckians desired to stay somewhat near their own home state, and they left General Breckinridge know how they felt about the matter. He then took up the question with General Bragg, who left the decision up to Breckinridge. At this time a coolness existed between Bragg and Breckinridge, because of their disagreement over tactical questions during the battle of Stone's River or Murfreesboro. Breckinridge's men found how the matter stood, and when they realized that to go with Breckinridge would be to support him against Bragg, the entire division started on the Mississippi campaign. The object of the expedition was to reinforce General Joseph E. Johnston, who in turn was to relieve General John C. Pemberton, then under siege at Vicksburg. Helm's brigade spent the entire month of June, 1863, in the vicinity of Jackson, Mississippi, fortifying their position, picketing and following the general routine of camp life.

Day by day General Pemberton's position was growing more serious and, on July 1st, the troops of General Johnston were ordered forward to undertake the hazardous venture beyond the Big Black River for an attack upon the Federal land force around Vicksburg. The weather at this time was almost unbearable, the roads were dusty, and drinking water was scarce. Many men died from exhaustion and sunstroke. The fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, necessitated a retreat of Johnston's army, which had not had sufficient time to relieve Pemberton. Federal troops now harassed Johnston's army, and from July 10th, to the 17th, a series of skirmishes between the advance lines occurred at irregular intervals. On the 16th of July, Johnston ordered a retreat by a pontoon bridge over Pearl River to Morton.

Helm's Kentucky Brigade acted as a rear guard for the army, but they were not attacked, as the Federals did not follow. Establishing a camp on the 21st near Morton, afterward called "Camp Hurricane," the weary army settled down for a much needed rest. On July 22nd, General Helm wrote to his wife:

"As usual we are on a grand retreat, the sufferings



Mrs. Ben Hardin Helm, "Mother" of the Orphan Brigade. One of the most significant events in her life following the war was the re-interment of the remains of her husband on September 19, 1884, (at the re-union of the First Kentucky Brigade of Infantry) in the private Helm Cemetery at Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

which, so far as I am personally concerned, are unparalleled in the war. We have to drink water that, in ordinary times, you wouldn't offer your horse; and I have hardly slept out of a swamp since we left Jackson. This is the sixth day, and we have not come much over forty miles. Our retreat is very slow and deliberate. The enemy have not annoyed us."

At Camp Hurricane, Helm's Brigade rested for about a month. Their stay there was quiet, with the least duties assigned to them in their entire military careers. This complacency, however, was broken on August 26th, when the division of General Breckinridge was ordered to travel by rail and steamer, by the way of Mobile, to Chattanooga (Tyner's Station), to reinforce Bragg. Helm's Brigade went into camp on September 2nd, and by the eighth day of that month the movements which were the preliminary steps leading to the great battle of Chickamauga were initiated. They marched and counter-marched and, finally after complicated preliminary military maneuvers, the division of Breckinridge bivouacked on September 18th, near Chickamauga Creek.

Approaching Chickamauga Creek from Pigeon Mountain, Breckinridge's division took their place on the east side of that stream. Their position was near Glass's Mill and they constituted the extreme left of the infantry of the army. Breckinridge ordered the Second Kentucky across the ford near Glass's Mill in order to determine the strength of the Federal forces, and the Sixth Kentucky was placed in close supporting distance. Other forces were dispatched along the creek, and on the morning of the 19th the remainder of Helm's brigade, along with other regiments, was sent across Glass's Ford. The advance position of Helm's brigade drew fire from the Federals.

While this minor engagement was taking place, General Breckinridge received orders from Lieutenant General D. H. Hill to withdraw his position and to proceed to a point about three miles south of Lee and Gordon's Mill. This place was on the road leading from Chattanooga to Lafayette, and was an ideal situation for guarding the approach to that road from Glass's Mill and the ford above. A few casualties resulted from the directed change in the position, but the losses were slight. However, this point was not held for any length of time, as Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk was moving the divisions of his wing as so many men upon a chess board.

The last important movement of Breckinridge's division occurred during the night of September 19th, and the morning of the 20th, when he was ordered to lengthen the battle line upon the right of Major Patrick R. Cleburne which placed the Kentuckians on the extreme right of the infantry line of battle, General Helm's brigade constituted the extreme left of Breckinridge's line, General Stovall's was in the center, and General Adam's brigade was on the right. With orders to advance on the Federals, Cleburne's and Breckinridge's divisions, after some delays, moved forward about 9:30 A.M., and this phase of the battle of Chickamauga opened with great fury and Helm's brigade, which had lunged forward with terrific force, turned out to be in the center of the fiercest fighting.

About 10:00 A.M. while Breckinridge's division was moving forward against the Federals, it was noticed that for some reason a part of the left brigade under Helm had not advanced simultaneously with the rest of the division. Later it was determined that they were facing breastworks situated in angular positions, which subjected Helm's men not only to fire in front but to a fierce enfilading fire from the left. This portion of the line proved to be one of the most hotly contested positions of the entire battlefield. Here gallant Kentuckians by the hundreds "gave their lives in reckless fashion," as they pushed ahead under the withering cross fire. General Helm, their beloved leader, riding boldly toward the works of the enemy was hit in the right side by a musket ball and fell mortally stricken from his horse.

Immediately after Helm had received his fatal wound, Colonel Joseph H. Lewis of the Sixth Kentucky was ordered to command the brigade, but the fire of the Federals drove the Confederates back two hundred yards to the rear and this left a gap in Breckinridge's line, which caused much tactical trouble and a great loss of life during the remainder of the battle. The rest of the encounter is of course a matter of historical record, and even the dying General Helm at the close of the day heard that the battle of Chickamauga was a victory for the Confederates.

When General Helm fell on the morning of September 20th, 1863, he was carried from the field by his two aides, Lieutenant William Wallace Herr and Lieutenant John B. Pirtle. Upon an examination of the wound in his right side, it was soon determined by the military surgeons of the field hospital that there was no hope for his recovery. He lingered for several hours and during the night of that fatal day he expired. The corpse of the thirty-two-year-old brigadier-general was then conveyed to the home of Colonel W. H. Dabney in Atlanta, where the remains lay until the 23rd. A funeral service for the brave soldier was held in the Episcopal Church, followed by interment in the Atlanta Cemetery with military honors.

Immediately after the battle of Chickamauga, dispatches were received by Lincoln concerning the engagement and the unconfirmed report of the death of General Helm was a great shock to him. Senator David Davis called on Lincoln on the 22nd of September and he found Lincoln suffering intense grief. "Davis," he said, "I feel as David of old did when he was told of the death of Absalom." Senator Davis understood that Lincoln was grieving over the death of his brother-in-law and he immediately excused himself. On September 24, 1863, Lincoln sent a telegram to Major-General William S. Rosecrans at Chattanooga stating that he had read the southern account of the battle of Chickamauga in the Richmond papers in which, among other Confederate generals, Helm of Kentucky was listed as killed. Yet, at the same time, he explained to Rosecrans that a Brigadier-General John (B. H.) Helm was listed as among those wounded. In all likelihood Lincoln held out a faint hope for awhile that General Helm had been wounded and not killed, but such was not the case.

On the same day that he wired General Rosecrans, Lincoln sent a telegram to his wife, who was then residing at the Fifth Avenue Hotel while on a visit to New York City. In terse sentences he told her of the battle in which "we are worsted." Among the casualties, he informed her rather coldly, because in a telegram he could not well afford to show any sympathy for a rebel general, that "your brother-in-law, Helm," was among those killed in the engagement.

In some sections of the war-torn country, news traveled rather slowly and on October 11, 1863, Governor John L. Helm wrote Mrs. Robert S. Todd of Lexington that he had just received the news of the death of his son, who fell at Chickamauga. His letter was rather pathetic:

"Elizabethtown, Ky.
October 11, 1863

Dear Madam:

It is due to you that I announce the death of my son. He fell in the battle south of Chattanooga I have unquestionable information. He was buried in Atlanta. It is probable Emilie was there. Could you through friends or by your own relationship secure for Emilie a passport home. If she could be allowed to come to Nashville I would go after her, if a pass would be allowed me. I am totally at a loss to know how to begin. Could you or one of your daughters write to Mrs. Lincoln and through her secure a pass?

In deep sorrow
I am respectfully
John L. Helm."

Governor Helm was correct in his assumption that Emilie had attended her husband's funeral. Having accompanied her husband South, she was visiting her sister, Mrs. N. H. R. Dawson at Selma, Alabama, at the time of General Helm's death, and she had been notified by General Bragg to come to Atlanta for the funeral services. She arrived just in time to be present at the sad rites.

After the funeral, Mrs. Helm planned to return with her two children to her mother's home in Lexington and General Bragg had promised her that he would intercede for her and try to obtain a pass from General Grant, but that Union General was not sympathetic to the proposal. However at the suggestion of Governor Helm, Mrs. Todd, acting through the Lexington postmaster, Dr. L. Beecher Todd, a cousin of Mrs. Lincoln, asked for permission to go to Georgia and to bring her bereaved daughter and her two grandchildren home. Accordingly Lincoln obliged Mrs. Todd with the following pass which he sent by telegram in the care of the postmaster:

"War Department, October 15, 1863, L. B. Todd,
Lexington:

I send the following pass to your care.

A. Lincoln

"Washington, D. C. October 15, 1863

To Whom it May Concern: Allow Mrs. Robert S. Todd, widow, to go South and bring her daughter, Mrs. General B. Hardin Helm, with her children north to Kentucky.

A. Lincoln"

Knowing that Mrs. Helm would also need a pass as soon as she started her journey homeward, Lincoln about two months later wrote the following order:

"Executive Mansion, Washington, December 14, 1863

Whom it may concern: It is my wish that Mrs. Emily T. Helm (widow of the late General B. H. Helm, who fell in the Confederate service), now returning to Kentucky, may have protection of person and property, except as to slaves, of which I say nothing.

A. Lincoln."

Lincoln assumed, although one wonders why, that Mrs. Helm would take an oath of allegiance to the United States. He carefully prepared the following documents for her to subscribe:

"December 14, 1863—Amnesty to Mrs. E. T. Helm, Executive Mansion, Washington, December 14, 1863
Mrs. Emily T. Helm, not being excepted from the benefits of the proclamation by the President of the United States issued on the eighth day of December, 1863, and having on this day taken and subscribed the oath according to said proclamation, she is fully relieved of all penalties and forfeitures, and remitted to all her rights — all according to said proclamation, and not otherwise; and, in regard to said restored rights of person and property, she is to be protected and afforded facilities as a loyal person.

Abraham Lincoln"

(Continued to the March, 1972 issue)

March 1972

requested by Swett and Lincoln to see Mr. Power, and to look around town, and watch for suspicious characters. He arrived here three or four days ago, and at once commenced a vigorous shadowing of several of the small hotels, but he saw no one whom he recognized. This afternoon Mr. Power came into town in a hurry and hunted up Tyrrell and informed him that two very hard-looking cases had been out to the cemetery looking around, and he felt assured that they were there for no good purpose. One registered as from Racine, and the other from Kenosha, Wis. Their names are suppressed, since they have had nothing to do with what occurred later. An effort will of course be made to find out who they are, and should they prove to be innocent injustice would be done them by telling now who they are. Mr. Power, not being used to detective work, could give but meager descriptions of them. The result of the interview with Tyrrell is unknown, but he must have concluded that election night was an excellent one in which to rob the tomb.

The evening's train brought from Chicago ex-Chief of the Secret Service Elmer Washburn, who, it seems, had been requested by Swett and Lincoln to come here and aid Tyrrell. About half-past 6 Washburn, Tyrrell and three other men went out to Oakwood (Oak Ridge) and concealed themselves in Memorial Hall inside the monument to await developments. One man was posted in the labyrinth in the rear, so called because of the walls running in different directions and making numerous passage ways, these walls supporting the terrace. His object was to hear the noise made in the vault if any were made. After patiently waiting for nearly three hours, and when about tired out from standing still, the utmost silence being impatative, he heard a grating noise which lasted perhaps five minutes. Then, in a little while, came several successive thuds, as if some one was hammering. The time having arrived for action, Washburn and his men slipped out of the door, with cocked revolvers in their hands, determined to shoot to kill if any resistance was made. Just as they were turning the corner to the left one of the men accidentally exploded his revolver. The noise was very loud, so still were the surroundings, and unfortunately it was too loud, for, though there were but about 120 feet to go over, when the officers got to the door of the vault the dastardly villains were gone. They must have had some one watching to give them the signal of danger or else had come outside for a breath of fresh air and heard the snapping of the cap and ran into the woods which surrounded the monument. It is but a short distance, and a man could get within shelter and be unobservable in a quarter of a minute. The men at once scattered, and went in the direction the thieves had gone, and while dodging behind the trees, two of them exchanged shots, each mistaking the other for one of the fugitives. After shooting at each other, they cried "Wash," "Wash," indicative of a friend in such an emergency, and then they found out their mistake. The bullets whizzed close to both, and it was miraculously that they escaped injury.

No traces of the thieves being discovered, the party returned to the catacomb, and there beheld a sight which made them sad. The body, as is known perhaps, is inclosed in a lead casket. This is surrounded by a cedar case, and the receptacle of these is a marble sarcophagus. The latter had a double lid, the upper one not being as large as the other. Both had been pried off with a chisel or an ax, and somewhat chipped in the operation. The under lid was laid crosswise on the casket, the head-piece on the floor, and the upper lid standing against the wall. The casket itself was pulled out about a foot from the body of the sarcophagus, and a small piece had been taken off on the floor, where an ax with the edge full of marble-dust, an ordinary chisel, and a pair of nippers. The other tools had evidently been taken away since the lock on the iron-grated door had been sawed-off.

It should perhaps be stated that the sarcophagus was in the catacomb and not in the crypt, being thus placed in order that visitors might see it. The damage done is comparatively little.

The officers of course were disappointed at not catching the vandals, but they think it is only a question of a little time when they will be apprehended.

Only one motive can be attributed to these despoilers of the grave, and that is the hope of a reward for the restoration of the remains. If they had succeeded in

carrying them off, it certainly could not have been their intention to take away the casket, for it must weigh from 500 to 600 pounds, and half a dozen men could not have carried it to the fence for transfer to a wagon in the road. It is more than likely that they intended to cut open the casket and gather up the bones and dust of the martyr-President and put them in a bag. What would have been the indignation of the country had this been done! The scheme concocted by these men is certainly unparalleled in the history of crime and, now that there is evidence of minds so debased, it is certain that measures will be taken to guard the monument and prevent future attempts. The facts given above did not come until early this morning, and are known to only a few, otherwise the outrage would have occupied as great a share of the attention of the community as the election. Words cannot express the feelings of those who do know it, and it is earnestly hoped that the double... perpetrators of this attempted robbery of the remains of America's most loved President will soon be brought to justice.

A Lincoln Campaign Song - 1860

The May 5, 1908, *Oxford Democrat* of South Paris, Maine, published a Lincoln campaign song that was sung at a rally at Paris Hill, Maine, sometime in 1860. Hannibal Hamlin and his brother Elijah spoke at the rally. On the platform with them was a wooden chair said to be made of rails split by "Old Abe himself."

The text of the song was written by a reader for the newspaper in response to a request from a reader. The person who wrote the words from memory (she may well have been at the rally in 1860) was Mrs. E. V. Canwell of South Paris. The singing of the Rally Song was led at the mass meeting at Paris Hill by "Mr. Locke, the army balladist." He may have been attached to the local militia.

The text of the song follows:

Hark! Hark! A signal gun is heard
Just out beyond the fort;
The great ship of state, my boys
Is coming into port.
With tattered sails and anchor gone,
I fear the rogues will strand her.
She carried now a sorry crew,
And needs a new commander.

Old Ab'ram is the man
With a sturdy mate
From the Pine Tree State,
Old Ab'ram is the man.

Four years ago she put to sea,
With prospects brightly beaming;
Her hub was strong, her sails new bent,
A long, protracted steaming.
She loved the gale, She plowed the wave,
Nor feared the deep's commotion.
Majestic gently on she sailed
Proud mistress of the ocean.

Buchanan was the man,
But his four year's trip,
Leaves a crippled ship,
Buchanan was the man.

Our ship is getting out of trim,
'Tis time to calk and grove her;
She's foul astern of human gore,
They've turned her to a slaver.
She's bound for Africa, bound to coast,
Her flying bordemen hunting.
Until she strained from stern to stern,
And lost her sails in hunting.

Old Ab'ram is the man
With a sturdy mate
From the Pine Tree State,
Old Ab'ram is the man.

We'll give her what repairs she needs,
A thorough overhauling;
Her survey crew shall be dismissed
Into some honest calling.
Brave Lincoln is the man, shall take the helm,
On truth and right relying,
In calm or peace, in storm or war,
He'll keep her colors flying.

Brave Lincoln is the man,
With a sturdy mate
From the Pine Tree State
Brave Lincoln is the man.

Brig.-Gen. Ben Hardin Helm
Mrs. Lincoln's "Rebel" Brother-In-Law

(Continued from February, 1972 issue)

Through correspondence with the Todd family, Lincoln had been informed that Mrs. Helm owned some six hundred bales of cotton located in Jackson, Mississippi, and Atlanta, Georgia, over which she wished to estab-

lish a claim of ownership. To take care of this matter, Lincoln added the following postscript to the document of amnesty:

"P.S. Mrs. Helm claims to own some cotton at Jackson, Mississippi and also some in Georgia; and I shall be glad, upon either place being brought within our lines, for her to be afforded the proper facilities to show her ownership, and take her property."

A. Lincoln"

The amnesty oath which Lincoln prepared for Mrs. Helm to subscribe was as follows:

"District of Columbia

SS.

Washington County,

I, Emily T. Helm, do solemnly swear in presence of Almighty God that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States, thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decisions of the Supreme Court; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all proclamations of the President, made during the existing rebellion, having reference to slaves so long and so far as not modified or declared void by the Supreme Court. So help me God."

Traveling northward by steamer under a flag of truce, Mrs. Helm arrived at Fortress Monroe. At that port a Federal officer came on board and told all the passengers that only those who would take the oath of allegiance to the United States would be allowed to land. In spite of her belief that she might be sent back to Georgia, the scene of her greatest sorrow, she steadfastly refused to take the oath. She was practically without funds and in great distress over the death of her gallant husband, but she remained adamant. She would not take the oath of allegiance, because her friends might feel that she had not been true to the cause for which her husband had given up his life. Her refusal was not that of bravado. The Union officers tried to reason with her, but she consistently refused to yield. She asked for permission to proceed to Washington on parole, pledging her word to return in case she was called upon to take the oath. Perplexed over the president's orders in regard to his sister-in-law, the officer in charge telegraphed Lincoln for further instructions. His reply was:

"Send her to me."

Realizing that she could not continue her journey to Kentucky, Mrs. Helm proceeded with one of her daughters to Washington, D. C. for a visit with the Lincolns. Upon her arrival at the Executive Mansion, she was cordially received. Emilie and Mary, both grief-stricken, because Mrs. Lincoln had lost her son, Willie, choked up with tears and tried to find comfort in each other's arms. After the amenities, she explained to her brother-in-law her predicament, and she told the president that she did not intend to embarrass him, or make herself conspicuous in any way, provided he would allow her to proceed to her home in Kentucky. With such explanations which Lincoln considered reasonable, she was accorded every kindness, and while a guest in the White House she occupied the bedroom which had been elaborately decorated for the visit of the Prince of Wales during the Buchanan administration.

Lincoln undoubtedly realized that Emilie's presence in the capital would start gossip-monger's tongues wagging about the rebel in the Executive Mansion. Orville H. Browning recorded in his diary that he called on the president on Monday, December 14, 1863, and that Lincoln told him "his sister-in-law, Mrs. Helm was in the house, but he did not wish it known." Evidently Lincoln was worried about the distressing financial condition of his sister-in-law, because he told Browning that "she wished an order for the protection of some cotton she had at Jackson, Mississippi. He thought she ought to have it, but he was afraid he would be censured if he did so."

If Lincoln hoped to keep Mrs. Helm's presence at the Executive Mansion a secret, he was doomed to disappointment, because this ardent Southerner could not keep her tongue when the Confederacy was assailed. After all, her husband had given his life for the South, and the least she could do would be to defend those

institutions which he had cherished. As a wife of a Confederate general, Mrs. Helm was to be the butt of many vindictive remarks from Northerners who did not relish her presence in Washington.

One day Senator Ira Harris and General Daniel E. Sickles paid the Lincolns a call and, upon greeting Mrs. Helm, the General said that he had told the Senator that she was in Washington and that perhaps she could give him some news concerning his old colleague, John C. Breckinridge. Mrs. Helm replied that she had not seen General Breckinridge for quite some time and that she could give him no news concerning his friend. To all of Senator Harris's questions, she gave him non-committal answers. Evidently this angered Harris, who remarked that the Union soldiers had whipped the rebels at Chattanooga and that he had heard that "the scoundrels ran like scared rabbits." This was more than Mrs. Helm could tolerate and she remarked that the Confederates had followed the example that the Federals had "set them at Bull Run and Manassas."

General Sickles could not forget this affront and he struggled on his crutches, because he had only one leg, to the president's room to tell Lincoln about his sister-in-law. Upon hearing of the details of the conversation, Lincoln said, "The child has a tongue like the rest of the Todds." This remark appeared to have further agitated the General and in an excited and domineering voice he told Lincoln, "You should not have that rebel in your house." This dictatorial manner on the part of Sickles angered Lincoln and he informed the general that he was usually in the habit of choosing his own guests, and that Mrs. Helm was in his house because she had been ordered there.

To prevent any further embarrassing situations, no one in the Lincoln household mentioned the war or politics, and, after nearly a week's visit, Mrs. Helm planned to resume her trip to Kentucky. To spare his sister-in-law further pain, Lincoln did not mention the oath of allegiance, and, before her departure, he earnestly expressed to her his sorrow over the death of her husband. In order that she might not be molested on her journey homeward, Lincoln gave her a letter "to protect her against the mere fact of being General Helm's widow." In providing Emilie with this safeguard to protect her person and property (except as to slaves), Lincoln said, "Little sister I never knew you to do a mean thing in your life. I know you will not embarrass me in any way on your return to Kentucky."

Emilie traveled to Kentucky fully aware that she should say nothing against the Lincoln administration, because of the president's kindness to her. However, Lexington and Elizabethtown were not the peaceful, serene communities that she had known before the war. In Lexington, she found conditions exceedingly trying because of the tyrannical rule of General Stephen G. Burbridge who was enforcing martial law upon the citizens of the Blue Grass Country. In fact, the blustering threats of Burbridge kept Mrs. Helm in a constant state of fear and she was afraid to leave the house. Nevertheless her presence in Lexington did not go unnoticed by the Union authorities, and, within less than a year after her return home, a malicious rumor of treasonous acts against the government was trumped up against her. Upon hearing the charges, the president wrote General Burbridge the following letter:

"Washington, August 8, 1864

Major-General Burbridge, Lexington, Ky.:

Last December Mrs. Emily T. Helm, half sister of Mrs. L., and widow of the rebel General Ben Hardin Helm, stopped here on her way from Georgia to Kentucky, and I gave her a paper, as I remember, to protect her against the mere fact of her being General Helm's widow. I hear a rumor today that you recently sought to arrest her, but was prevented by her presenting the paper from me. I do not intend to protect her against the consequences of disloyal words or acts, spoken or done by her since her return to Kentucky, and if the papers given her by me can be construed to give her protection for such words or acts, it is hereby revoked pro tanto. Deal with her for current conduct just as you would with any other.

A. Lincoln"

In the light of this letter it would appear that Mrs. Helm had actually violated a confidence, that once she was safely home in Kentucky she had forgotten Lincoln's

request and her promise not to embarrass him or the administration. Yet, there are certain indications which will lead one to believe that the rumors about her disloyal acts and words were not true. While she sympathized with the war-torn South, she was careful that no deed or statement of hers could be so construed as to make Lincoln regret his consideration of her. In Kentucky, Mrs. Helm was accorded every kindness and sympathy by her friends, irrespective of conflicting opinions, and it is not likely that she made many enemies, because of her sincere loyalty to the South. Of course, her position in Lexington society naturally kept her in the eyes of the public and some Federal officers might have been resentful of her Southern learnings, which apparently had official sanction.

Only once did Emilie Helm have occasion to use Lincoln's protection paper and that was when she asked a Federal officer to keep his troops, who had camped near her home, from trespassing and to cease taking her family's food as it was being cooked in their kitchen. The officer, in all likelihood, taken aback by the presidential order, complied with the request in a good-natured way. How General Burbridge learned of Mrs. Helm's immunity by presidential sanction is not clear. It is to be supposed the Federal officer reported Mrs. Helm's use of the protection paper to General Burbridge, his superior in command, and the latter, desiring to clear up the matter in case Mrs. Helm should make herself obnoxious, undoubtedly had the matter referred to President Lincoln, who appears to have been apprised of the circumstances through the unreliable channel of a rumor. The fact remains, however, that Mrs. Helm was not arrested and never had any trouble with the United States authorities, because she "could never have been so lost to (her) sense of obligation to President Lincoln."

In spite of Mrs. Helm's commendable personal conduct, the activities of her sister, Miss Katherine ("Kitty") Todd, and her mother, Mrs. Robert S. Todd, in behalf of the cause of the South may have placed the young widow in an extremely unfavorable light. Miss Todd and her mother were unusually active in the fall of 1864 when they attempted to prevent the infliction of the death penalty upon Captain McGee and Walter Ferguson, two Confederate soldiers who had ridden with the troops of General John Hunt Morgan. The Todds tried desperately to have the order of General Burbridge rescinded and they even went so far as to petition Lincoln to commute the sentence, but their efforts were in vain. It is believed that the President would have yielded to their pleas, but the petition of mercy was intercepted and Lincoln did not receive their request for commutation. Consequently, the two men were taken out of prison on November 15th, and were hanged near the fair-grounds in Lexington.

It was the policy of Lincoln to commute most of the death sentences of Burbridge, who considered criticism of the administration as treason; however, the constant, if not righteous, agitation of the Todds against the general's authority in Lexington must have caused Lincoln considerable embarrassment. Lincoln would have been especially chagrined in the summer and fall of 1864 to have had political capital made of the safeguard he gave Mrs. Helm. His letter to Burbridge nipped in the bud any criticism that might have arisen over the protection Mrs. Helm enjoyed, and yet at the same time Lincoln's orders did not place her position in jeopardy. She was an aristocratic lady whose position, whether the authorities liked it or not, placed her beyond the ordinary clutches of military authority. Lincoln would have not allowed Burbridge to deal with his sister-in-law, or any other member of the Todd family "just as you would with any other," in spite of the fact that such words were recorded over his signature.

A further proof that Mrs. Helm did not violate the confidence of Lincoln is indicated by his interest in attempting to help her get possession of her six hundred bales of cotton. In January, 1865, Lincoln granted passes to General James W. Singleton and Judge James Hughes to go South to buy cotton and tobacco and at this time he gave the men a brief history of his sister-in-law and told them of her ownership of a considerable number of bales of cotton which she had in the South. Lincoln requested Singleton and Hughes, if possible, to make some arrangement with Mrs. Helm about the sale of this commodity.

During the latter part of March, 1865, Emilie Helm, along with a companion, Mrs. Bernard Pratt, a relative of President Zachary Taylor and General Singleton, obtained passes to go to Richmond, Virginia, to see about the cotton, but she selected an inopportune time for a business trip, because the fall of Richmond was at last about to become an accomplished fact. Mrs. Helm was advised to leave immediately, which she did on the next flag of truce boat. By orders of General E. O. C. Ord, Captain Robert Lincoln, her nephew, was instructed to accompany Mrs. Helm and her friend from Fortress Monroe to a point near Petersburg. She arrived in Washington on March 25th, and registered at the Metropolitan Hotel. By this time Lincoln had secured from General Grant an order for the protection of the cotton, the great bulk of which was in storage in Atlanta, Georgia. The cotton had survived the scorched-earth policy of the Confederacy and the invading Yankee armies of the North, but, before she could sell it or have it insured, an accidental fire destroyed it. While in Washington and Baltimore on this business trip, Emilie did not call on her sister and brother-in-law, because they were at that time visiting with General Grant at City Point, Virginia.

As her residence in Kentucky had been intolerable, Emilie bought a home in Madison, Indiana, which was north of the Ohio River, where she could remain free of the turmoil of military rule. There she became the organist in Christ Church, where, as an accomplished musician, she earned a livelihood. The remainder of her long life was spent in devotion to her gallant husband's memory, and her cruel fate was softened somewhat by her interest in her three children, Katherine, Elodie and Ben Hardin. As a widow in her early twenties, she had as her main purpose in life the education of her children, and this expense necessitated the acceptance of some suitable position.

After residing in Madison for ten or twelve years, she moved to Louisville and for about two years taught a class in music. This gave her an opportunity to visit on many occasions the ancestral estate of the Kentucky Helms, located near the northern city limits of Elizabethtown. Upon the renewal of her acquaintances in the little village where she and her husband had known so much happiness, she decided to return to Elizabethtown where she was appointed postmistress by President Chester A. Arthur, an office which she retained for about twelve years. In Elizabethtown she purchased a dignified, gray brick home on Poplar Street which had been built about the year 1820.

Moving again to Louisville, after giving up her position in the Elizabethtown postoffice, she made her residence in that city for a short period. Ben Hardin had always promised his mother to buy a Blue Grass farm, as soon as he could make the money, and in 1912 he purchased the colonial home of Colonel Abraham Bowman, situated near Lexington on the Bowman's Mill Road. This farm was formerly the property of General Levi Todd on which their pioneer ancestor had erected Todd's Fort in 1778. There, in an atmosphere of the past, surrounded by the trappings of her soldier-husband, and deeply imbued with the Lincoln tradition, she died February 20, 1930, at the remarkable age of ninety-three years.

The most significant event in her life, after the war had ended and peace again hovered over the Southland, was the occasion of the reunion of the First Kentucky (Orphan) Brigade of Infantry at Elizabethtown on September 19, 1884. It was at this solemn and impressive gathering of Confederate veterans that the remains of General Ben Hardin Helm was re-interred in the burial ground of his fathers, in a private cemetery on the ancestral acres of his pioneer forebears. Here, in the shadow of a great granite shaft erected by the State of Kentucky in honor of Governor John L. Helm, the Confederate general's remains were placed among his kindred.

"Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone

In deathless song shall tell,

When many a vanishing age hath flown,

The story how ye fell;

Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight,

Nor Time's remorseless doom,

Shall dim one ray of Glory's light

That gilds your deathless tomb."

—Theodore O'Hara,

The Bivouac of the Dead

